

**July 10, 2002**

## **Smuggler Charges Through I-15 Checkpoint Causes Vehicle Accident**

**Temecula, Calif** - A Mexican National transporting six undocumented immigrants blew through the I-15 checkpoint yesterday evening.

Approximately  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile north of the checkpoint, the smuggler attempted to pass a vehicle by driving in the breakdown lane of the highway. The smuggler lost control of the vehicle, and careened through traffic to the right guardrail, striking it, then careened back across traffic, striking the left guardrail. At some point the smuggler either struck or forced a family's sport utility vehicle off the road into the center divide. The four occupants of that vehicle sustained no injuries and there was minor damage to the vehicle.

When Border Patrol agents arrived on the scene, the smuggler was attempting to free himself from the vehicle. The smuggler and two other occupants in the passenger compartment were uninjured. One female occupant in the passenger compartment and a pregnant female and two males locked in the trunk sustained injuries.

All injured occupants were transported to Rancho Springs Community Hospital for medical treatment. The smuggler was also taken to the same hospital as a precautionary evaluation. The smuggling vehicle's airbags had been disabled and all of the seatbelts except for the drivers' had been removed. The condition of the vehicle and the smuggler's callous disregard for human life put not only himself and his passengers at risk, but also the entire community. All seven individuals are in the custody of the U.S. Border Patrol pending investigation and a felony prosecution of 8 USC 1324 on the smuggler.